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Josiah's Secret.

A Play in Three Acts

by Josiah Allen's wife.

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JOSIAH'S SECRET
A PLAY

By Josiah Allen's Wife



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JOSIAH'S SECRET--A Play in Three Acts

By JOSIAH ALLEN'S WIFE

Characters:—Josiah Allen—Samantha Allen.

ACT I.

(Samantha's kitchen, Samantha standing by a big churn looking very tired. Josiah sitting by the table reading a newspaper with great interest).

SAMANTHA. I've been churnin' on this cream for two full hours, ever since I finished white-washin' the back kitchen, and ironin' and moppin' and bakin'; I'm all beat out and I wish you'd help me a little.

JOSIAH. (Not lookin' up from his paper). I would love to Samantha, nothin' pleases me more than to churn two or three pails full of cream. Men had always ruther do that than to eat.

SAMANTHA. Take holt then and let me rest a minute. I did a big days work before I begun to churn, and I'm tired out.

JOSIAH. (Still reading). I would in a minute, Samantha, but if I take this tub of butter to Jonesville I've got to grease the democrat, it don't run good. (Lookin' up from his paper). I want you to hear this Samantha. Here is eloquence and good horse sense, I feel that I love the man that wrote it—love him like a brother. You know I always contended that wimmen wuz too weak and helpless to vote, even if they knew enough, which they don't.

(Samantha stretches up her weary form and leans on the churn dasher and says). Yes, I know you always argyed that way, but what is the piece, Josiah?

JOSIAH. Oh, he is answerin' a Woman's Suffrage argument. He sez the idee of a great strong man allowin' a weak and delicate woman to vote or endure any other hardship is perfectly obnoxious and repugnant to any man that has the sperit of a man. The very idee of lettin' them angels strain themselves liftin' at the political pole is more than a tender-hearted man can endure. And he goes on to say, If I were a woman I would do nothin' important, I would emulate the rose

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and its wisdom, I would allure and charm and be silent. Man wuz made to protect woman, to work for her, and vote for her. Woman wuz made to smile on man and charm him in his hours of ease. Do you hear that, Samantha? That masterly, convincin' logick?

(Samantha has resumed her churning again and says). Yes, I hear it, Josiah. But I want a pail of cold water; you know I have to draw it up by hand since the pump broke, and git a ten quart pail of water on the end of the pole, I don't believe the political pole would draw much harder.

JOSIAH. Yes it would, Samantha; I guess you'd find it drawed harder, wimmen little know the awful tuckerin' work it is to vote.

SAMANTHA. Well, I'd like a pail of water, Josiah, and I wish you'd come and help me churn a little; seems as if my back will break off.

JOSIAH. I told you, Samantha, I'd got to grease that democrat! But what do you think of this beautiful article?

SAMANTHA. The man goes too fur, Josiah, he hain't megum enough, wimmen hain't angels.

JOSIAH. They be angels; I always said so.

SAMANTHA. And I always said they wuzn't. And I always said that wimmen did harder work than to vote and men never seemed to worry about that.

JOSIAH. (Solemnly). No they don't do any harder work, Samantha, votin' wears on us strong minded men terribly, and what would it do to a weak, fraguile woman? Oh that man puts men and wimmen in their different spears so beautiful and so plain that it seems as if a infant babe, or even a woman, could understand it. (Josiah steps nearer to Samantha and points to the piece in the paper). If you'd foller this man's idees, Samantha, I'd be the happiest man in Jonesville or the world. (He sits down, leans back with his fingers in the arm-holes of his vest in a very important attitude).

SAMANTHA. (Reasonably). I'd be willin' to charm you, Josiah but I don't see how I could allure and charm and do my house work at the same time. And even if I wuz to do the Rose Act when I have a big churnin' to do I don't see how it would affect you, for you always have to grease the democrat or the sarah, or ile harnesses churnin' days.

JOSIAH. (In a cross tone). What of it? What if I do?

SAMANTHA. Oh don't git agitated, Jesiah, this butter has got to be churned and worked over, and the rest of my mornin's work done, and I wish you'd pull up a pole of water, and help finish the churnin' and bring up that tub from the suller and help pack it. It is hard work for a woman's back and arms when they're most broke already.

JOSIAH. (Rising and speaking very cross). If I go to Jonesville that democrat has got to be greased. How can you expect a democrat to run without ilein'? And sometimes they won't run then. (He glances at Bryan's picture, hanging on the wall, grabs up his basin of wagon grease, and starts off almost on the run and slams the door behind him.)

(Samantha stands a minute looking after him as if in deep thought, and then she drops the butter dasher down with a bang, and sets the churn back and says, speaking to herself). If I'm a ang 1 I'll stop churnin' long enough to breathe, and if I'm too weak and delicate to drop a slip of paper in a box once a year I'll set down before I drop down.

ACT II.

(Samantha's parlor, books, easy chairs, pictures, a high backed rocker covered with cretonne, placed so its occupant can see through the open door into the kitchen. Samantha is dressed in dark gingham with white collar and cuffs and white bib apron, she is arranging some books on the table and talking to herself.)

SAMANTHA. Josiah wants the Rose Act and he shall have it, I don't know exactly how to perform it without rules. I know roses blow out, but it can't be men want that, they're deadly opposed to their pardners talkin' on duty, which they call "blowin' round." (She steps forward in front of rocker and looks thoughtful). I guess it means to keep still and look pretty. (Looks up satisfied). I will try faithful to do it right, I'm always very thorough in anything I undertake. I believe that to allure and charm I must be in a settin' poster. (Sits down in rocker). I believe I ort to clasp my hands in a easy, graceful attitude. (Clasps her hands across her waist). And to look winsome I must smile some. (Smiles a good deal).

(Josiah enters kitchen with his basin of wagon grease in his hand. He glances at the churn and says.) Gracious heavens! hain't that butter finished? Nor the tea-kettle on at half-past leven! (Glances into the parlor). What is the matter? (Steps inside of door). What is the matter, Samantha?

SAMANTHA. (Smiles sweetly. Josiah yells). Why in the name of the gracious Peter hain't dinner under way?

(Samantha smiles).

JOSIAH. (Steps close to her). What are you tryin' to do anyway, Samantha?

SAMANTHA. (Calmly and firmly). I'm bein' winsome, Josiah, and tryin' to allure and charm.

JOSIAH. You're bein' a gol-darned fool, that's what you're a-bein'!

SAMANTHA. (Smiling, murmurs gently). Sweet pet!

JOSIAH. (Stamps his feet in anger and yells). Sweet pet! Dum foolishness! I shall lose the chance to sell that butter! And I'm starved!!! (Flings himself around). Twenty-four hours since I eat a mouful!

SAMANTHA. (Sweetly). Men are made to work for wimmen, dearest one. Them angels hain't made for work, or votin', or any other hardship. (Sweetly and smilingly). The cream is all ready for you to finish churnin'. The chicken to brile is in the store-room, the potatoes and vegetables in the suller. (Stops talking to give him three or four full smiles). The mop is hangin' up behind the back door, the stove brush and blackin' in the suller-way, and the lamp-chimney cleaner is hangin' over the kitchen sink.

(Josiah had stood as if dumb founded, now he yelled as he straightened up.) Dum it all! What are *you* goin' to do?

SAMANTHA. I'm goin' to charm and allure you, dear Josiah; wimmen are made to charm men, they should do nothin' important.

(Josiah drops into a chair, his arms hanging down at his side in a despairing way and stares at her.)

SAMANTHA. A clean house is important, therefore I will not clean. Eatin' is important therefore I will not cook, I will emulate the rose in its wisdom, I will charm and be silent. (She leans back in a luxurious attitude and smiles a good deal at him).

JOSIAH. (Rising). Are you a consarned lunatick? Or what duz ail you? (Puts on his glasses and looks closely at her. His angry looks changes to one of deep anxiety and alarm. With his eye on her all the time he edges off and reaches for the camphor bottle on a mantle

in the kitchen, takes it in one hand and then reaches for the soap stone on the kitchen stove and carries it back in a scared fashion. He asks low and appealingly). Don't you want your back rubbed, Samantha? Where is your worst pain? (He lays down the soap stun within easy reach on the table and steps cautiously near). Won't campfire relieve you? Shall I go after Miss Gowdey or the doctor? (Steps to one side and looks round as if uncertain what to do). Don't you want your feet soaked? (Glancin' towards the kitchen).

SAMANTHA. (Straightens up). Josiah Allen, I don't want soap stuns or campfire, I want reason and common sense in a pardner, that's what I want to relieve me. I have tried faithful to foller the rules you read this mornin'. You said you loved the man that wrote 'em and if I would only foller 'em you would be the happiest man in Jonesville or the world. I have follererd 'em for about twenty minutes and it has reduced you to the condition of a lunatick. If twenty minutes has brought you to this state, what would hours and days of it do and years? Now it has made you lose your morals, tear round, use wicked language, break your word to your grocer, and act. Now if you have had enough of allurin' and charmin' say so and I'll stop it.

JOSIAH. (Moved uneasily around while she was speaking and then said. Oh dum the piece! and dum the feller that wrote it!

SAMANTHA. (Leans back, clasps her hands and smiles, Josiah stamps on the floor and kicks, Samantha smiles sweetly and murmurs). Sweet, darling he-angel!

(Josiah runs his fingers through his hair till it stands on end, stamps, kicks the boot-jack across the floor and loosens a panel in the clothes press door. His anger seems to have spent itself in this, for he turns to her and says mournfully). I haven't had a mouful to eat for forty-eight hours. (Putting his hand to his head as if in despair for a minute or two, then lifting his head he says). Dear Samantha, I've had enough of the Rose Act, and I'm willin' to have you vote, I want you to, I'll carry you to the pole myself and swear you in if I go to jail the next minute.

SAMANTHA. (Getting up and going towards the kitchen). Be me-gum, Josiah, don't go too fast.

JOSIAH. I tell you Samantha, I've had enough allurin' and charmin'

to last me through a long life, now I want some meat vittles, and I want 'em quick!

ACT III.

(A pleasant sitting room, lamps lighted for evening. Samantha dressed in brown alpaca, with a book in her hand sits in an easy chair and says to herself).

SAMANTHA. Josiah sot off in good season after all for Jonesville, and at his request I went with him, and on the way we visited very agreeable. He wuz extremely affectionate, caused partly by his feelings, for he worships me, and partly by his dinner, for it wuz as good a dinner as hands ever got. I briled the young tender fowl I had already dressed, smashed up the potatoes with plenty of cream and butter in 'em, made an orange puddin' so delicious it would fairly melt in your mouth, and some fragrant coffee so rich and yaller with cream it would do anyone's soul good to drink it, and while I wuz gittin' dinner, such is my faculty for turnin' off work, I finished that butter, and immegiatly after dinner packed it, put a snow-white cloth over it, and we sot off in good season after all for Jonesville.

JOSIAH (Enters room, hangs up coat and hat and takes a comfortable chair, leans back looking very good natured, and says as he looks at Samantha and hitches his chair nearer to her). That sweet flowery talk I read this mornin' is a comfort to men to write, and makes 'em feel good natured and patronizin' towards wimmen. But come to crumple right down to real life that Rose Act wouldn't work worth a cent, and if it did, men would git sick of it, sick as a dog. (He draws his chair still nearer to Samantha).

SAMANTHA. And I felt like a fool sittin' there tryin' to allure and charm, smilin' stiddy when I knew everything wuz at loose ends in the kitchen. I wuz as happy agin when I wuz getting your dinner.

JOSIAH. (Heartily and loudly). So wuz I, Samantha, heaven knows, I wuz as happy as a king when you wuz gittin' it, and happier than any king ever wuz when I wuz eatin' it.

SAMANTHA. I dont know when I am happier than when I am makin' my home comfortable and agreeable, gittin' a good warm supper for you when I know you are comin' home tired and cold and hungry at night-fall. Goin' round reasonable and calm in a clean kitchen, bril-

in' a plump fowl or cookin' oysters and cream biscuits, and coffee or sunthin' else you like, settin' the snowy table and keepin' a bright fire blazin' on a clean hearth, waitin' for the man I love. (Enthusiastically as she steps to the table for her knitting). I am as happy again and any woman would be as happy again as she would be tryin' to do that Rose Act.

JOSIAH. (Earnestly). Yes, that is so, Samantha.

SAMANTHA. I tell you, Josiah, that wimmen that don't keep a hired girl and have to bring up five or six children by hand, besides doin' all the housework, washin' and ironin', sewin', skinmin' milk and makin' butter and cleanin' house and settin' hens and feedin' chickens and makin' rag carpets and quiltin' bed-quilts and knittin' stockin's and pickin' geese and dryin' apples and makin' soap and paperin' walls and paintin' doorsteps and tendin' flower gardens and weedin' onions and etcetera, they have to do some important work, they cannot set still and allure and charm, not for any length of time.

JOSIAH. That's so, Samantha, it hadn't ort to be expected of a poor woman.

SAMANTHA. (With knitting in her lap and spec's pushed up). No, Josiah, nor from rich wimmen either that have to wait on three or four hired girls, and have big houses in country and city, and tend big parties and give 'em, and go out drivin' every day and to the opera, and theatres, and to Eouope every now and then and to the sea-shore and mountains, and south and east and west, and ride out in yots and ortos and air-ships, and set on boards, charity and missionary and hospital boards, every one on 'em hard ones, and give balls and entertainments for the same. And get their children headed right in morals and education and society. And stand up hour after hour to be fitted for mornin' gowns and evenin' gowns and tea-gowns and dinner gowns and fussin' with cameras and pianolas and lectures on every subject under heaven. And their work amongst the poor, and makin' more than a thousand calls and receivin' the same. Good land! what time do they have for the Rose Act?

JOSIAH. They don't have any time for it, I always said so.

SAMANTHA. And won't you own up, Josiah, that rich wimmen and poor wimmen do harder work than to drop a little slip of paper onto the pole once or twice a year?

JOSIAH. (Looking very good natured). Yes, Samantha, we men know that hain't no harder on 'em than mailin' a letter. If I dast, I'd tell you the real reason why we male statesmen oppose wimmins' votin', but I dassen't tell, it is a state secret, jealously guarded by us male law-makers.

SAMANTHA. I wish you would tell me, Josiah. Men's talk on this subject is so strange and queer I'd love to know the real truth.

JOSIAH. (Firmly). And I'd love to tell you, Samantha, but I das-sent. We male men have guarded that political secret as we have the very apples in our eyes. (Shaking his head solemnly). No, as much store I set by you, Samantha, I don't dast to tell you.

(Samantha sits thinking deeply with her fingers on her forehead, then her face brightens up and she says gently). I thought, Josiah, that mebby you'd like to have me put on the tea-kettle and git a little lunch, we eat supper ruther early.

JOSIAH. (Heartily). Yes, I *would* like it, one of your good lunches would go to the spot, I guess I *will* tell you after all. But remember it is in strict confidence. We male men oppose wimmins' votin' because we want to keep the power in our own hands, and kinder boss round, and we talk about the hardships of wimmins' votin' and call 'em angels and so on jest as the doctor gives morphine to his patients to quiet 'em, and keep 'em still. But don't you tell for your life, Samantha Allen. If it wuz known in high political circles that I'd let the cat out of the bag, I'd no but I'd be imprisoned or exiled as a traitor and political informer.

SAMANTHA. No, I won't git you into any trouble, Josiah. I'd mistrusted that wuz it for some time, but didn't know it for certain till now.

JOSIAH. Well, don't you let on to Miss Gowdey or any other woman if you want *me* to keep a hull skin. And don't you think it is time to hang on the tea-kettle?



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